



# Memorandum

**TO:** Historic Landmarks Commission

**FROM:** Courtney Damkroger  
Historic Preservation Officer

**SUBJECT: PROPOSED CITY  
LANDMARK DESIGNATION  
FOR THE RANK HOUSE (HL03-147)  
128 PIERCE AVENUE**

**DATE:** January 27, 2003

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**APPROVED:**

**DATE:**

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## **BACKGROUND**

In November 2002 the Rank House located at 128 Pierce Avenue was evaluated in an updated Department of Parks and Recreation Form (DPR) and Historic Evaluation Sheet. The DPR (attached) stated that the building exceeded the qualification threshold for City Landmark status and would appear to be eligible for the National Register. Building owners Stephen and Margaret Carlson recently submitted an application for Historic Landmark designation of the residence using the research documented in the DPR.

The subject site is currently zoned R-1-8 Residential, and designated Medium Low Density Residential (8 DU/AC) on the General Plan Land Use and Transportation Diagram.

## **ANALYSIS**

The house at 128 Pierce Street was built in approximately 1888-1889. The first owner, and likely builder was Theodore Rank, a surveyor and civil engineer who was also San Jose's Assistant City Engineer for a period of time in the nineteenth century.

The one story Stick Style Victorian residence has a simple front-gabled roof and is detailed with both Stick and Eastlake ornamentation. A square bay window at the front contains double-hung windows that are set within casings that overlap at the top in a cross-board pattern. The flat frieze boards continue across the façade and frame the spindle work above the porch. The front gable end is flush with the plane of the bay window and is clad with fish scale shingles. The roof is supported at the porch with a single turned column and at the side with spindle fan brackets. The building is clad with channel rustic redwood drop siding that rises from grade to a plain, boxed cornice. Much of the original interior material of this well-maintained residence remains intact, including plaster and floors. The living room has original corbels at the bay window alcove, and the dining room exhibits an original fireplace surround and buffet. It is a unique representation of the Victorian style of architecture in San Jose, and is visually distinctive in its setting on Pierce Avenue with other residential structures of similar vintage.



The Rank House merits designation as a historic landmark based on its historical, cultural and architectural significance (see attached State form and Historic Evaluation Form). The building qualifies for landmark status based on the following criteria of the Historic Preservation Ordinance (Municipal Code Section 13.48.110):

6. Its embodiment of distinguishing characteristics of the Victorian era architectural type or specimen; and
8. Its embodiment of elements of architectural design in its ornate detailing and compositions that represent a significant innovation during the 1880s within the larger body of vernacular architecture in the region.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Planning staff recommends that the Historic Landmarks Commission forward a recommendation to the City Council to initiate proceedings to designate the Rank House as an Historic Landmark.

Courtney Damkroger  
Historic Preservation Officer

#### Attachment

- Photographs
- DPR form and City of San Jose Evaluation Sheet
- Map